

XXXVI.—*On the Nest and Eggs of Gerygone magnirostris, Gould.* By ALFRED J. NORTH, F.L.S.

"OF *Gerygone magnirostris* I regret to say but little information has as yet been received. The two examples in my collection are all that have come under my notice; and these were shot by Gilbert, on Greenhill Island, near Port Essington, while hovering over the blossoms of the mangroves and engaged in capturing the smaller kinds of insects, during which occupation they gave utterance to an extremely weak twittering song."

Since this passage was written by Gould (B. Austral. ii. pl. 100), nearly half a century ago, no additional information has been recorded respecting the Great-billed Gerygone. It is still a very rare bird in collections, the British Museum not possessing a single specimen at the time (1879) when Dr. Sharpe prepared the fourth volume of the Catalogue of Birds (p. 222), in which the members of the genus *Gerygone* are included. I am now able to give some fresh facts about it.

Mr. J. A. Boyd, of the Herbert River, North-eastern Queensland, who has devoted a large amount of his time during the last twenty years to Australian ornithology, informs me that *Gerygone magnirostris* is a common species in that neighbourhood, arriving in the latter part of September for the purposes of breeding, and departing again about the end of February or the middle of March, and that he has frequently obtained its nest, eggs, and young. With one exception, all the nests of this species found by Mr. Boyd were built in low trees overhanging a river or the bed of a creek. Early on the morning of the 25th of November, 1892, Mr. Boyd was successful in capturing a female sitting on her own two eggs, also one of a Bronze Cuckoo. The nest was built in a shaddock-tree in the garden, a most unusual place, this being the first occasion on which he has ever found the nest not overhanging a bank or stream. Subsequently Mr. Boyd obtained a nest with two fresh eggs on the 9th of December, and another on the 17th with three fresh eggs

in it. Occasionally three eggs are laid for a sitting, but two is the usual number.

From Mr. Boyd I have obtained several nests and sets of eggs for description, also the female that was captured on the nest. The nests of *Gerygone magnirostris* are long pendent structures varying from sixteen to twenty-four inches in length, the drooping end of a nearly leafless twig being covered with an irregular layer of nest-material about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter and from 9 to 12 inches in length before the nest proper is commenced. This is of a domed form, with a protecting hood well concealing the narrow entrance, and terminating at the lower extremity of the dome in a beard or tail which is typical of the nests of this genus. They are composed of shreds of bark, cocoanut fibre, dried grasses and weeds, skeletons of leaves, and the silky covering of spiders' nests, all matted together, and resembling more a hanging mass of debris left by the floods than a nest. The interior cavities of the nests are small and are warmly lined with feathers. A typical nest measures as follows:—total length 22 inches; from the top of the covered portion of the stem on which it is built to the swelling of the dome 10 inches; domed portion or nest proper, length 7 inches, breadth 5 inches; beard or tail underneath dome 5 inches; entrance to nest 1 inch in diameter; interior cavity, height 3 inches and a quarter, breadth 2 inches and a quarter; base of interior portion of protecting hood over entrance, 2 inches. The eggs vary in shape from oval to elongate-oval, and are of a rich pinkish white, which is almost obscured by exceedingly minute freckles and dots of pinkish red, becoming thicker towards the larger end, where, in some instances intermingled with a few spots of dull purplish grey, an indistinct zone is formed. Others have their markings equally distributed over the shell, with one or two fine hair-lines or small coalesced patches on the larger end. The set of two on which the female was captured measure alike 0.7×0.46 inch; a set of three taken on the 1st of January, 1892, (A) 0.69×0.5 inch, (B) 0.67×0.47 inch, (C) 0.67×0.49

inch; a set of two taken on the 10th of October, 1892, (A) 0.65×0.48 inch, (B) 0.65×0.47 inch.

GoULD describes this species as having all the under surface white, tinged with brownish buff, and the base of the lower mandible pearl-white. In the specimen forwarded the throat is comparatively white, and the bill is of a uniform deep olive-black. This species is often the foster-parent of one of the Bronze Cuckoos, the eggs of which are of a deep olivaceous brown, minutely marked with small black dots on the larger end, and not unlike the eggs of *Lamprococcyx plagosus*, but larger, darker, and the surface of the shell smooth and glossy. Three Cuckoo's eggs taken from different nests of *Gerygone magnirostris* measure as follows:—(A) 0.83×0.55 inch, (B) 0.78×0.53 inch, (C) 0.8×0.53 inch. The average measurement of six eggs of *L. plagosus* taken from nests in the neighbourhood of Sydney is 0.72 inch in length by 0.51 inch in breadth.

XXXVII.—Notes on the Synonymy of some Palæarctic Birds.

By H. E. DRESSER, F.Z.S., F.L.S.

I. EMBERIZA SAHARÆ.

HAVING recently been busy with the synonymy of some of the Palæarctic birds, I have had occasion investigate the original description of *Emberiza saharæ*. Dr. Sharpe (Cat. B. Brit. Mus. xii. p. 563) gives it as "Tristram, Ibis, 1859, p. 295;" but this is clearly an error, for the species was known by that name several years before 1859, and Canon Tristram certainly did not there describe it, or claim to do so—he merely included it in his list of Algerian birds as "*Fringillaria saharæ* of Bonaparte," and remarked on the differences between it and *Emberiza striolata*. The earliest reference to the bird that I can find is that of Malherbe, who in his list of the birds of Algeria (1855) attributed the name to Levaillant, jr., as "*Emberiza sahari*, Levaill., jr., Expl. sc. Alg., Ois. pl. ix. bis, fig. 2," and in his preface, referring to this work, writes: "L'Exploration scientifique